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Furor Over Greenpeace Case Continues in France

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PARIS, Sept. 21 — Opposition politicians called on President François Mitterrand today to explain the Government's actions in a political crisis that led to the resignation of Defense Minister Charles Hernu.

Mr. Hernu stepped down on Friday and the head of the French intelligence agency was dismissed as the Government moved to end the furor over the sinking in New Zealand of the Rainbow Warrior, an antinuclear protest ship. The vessel was the flagship of the environmentalist group Greenpeace.

Today politicians and press commentators predicted further political problems for Mr. Mitterrand, asserting that his standing at home and abroad had been affected by the affair.

"The fact of having designated a scapegoat appears to be one more maneuver to try to delay the establishment of the truth and to disguise the real responsible parties," said Jean Lecanuet, president of the center-right Union for French Democracy, alluding to Mr. Hernu's resignation.

Contending that Mr. Mitterrand and Prime Minister Laurent Fabius knew in advance of the plan to sink the Greenpeace ship, Mr. Lecanuet went on, "It is impossible for them to evade their responsibility, and it is unlikely

that they were not informed."

The reaction of rightist leaders indicated that they would continue to make an issue of purported Government mishandling of the affair, particularly with the approach of legislative elections scheduled for March.

'Incompetence and Incoherence'

"Lies and discord were added to incompetence and incoherence," said André Rossinot, head of the Radical Party, another opposition group.

Mr. Hernu, a close friend of Mr. Mitterrand, resigned as Defense Minister after Government denials of responsibility in the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior crumbled in the face of French

press disclosures about the operation.

The French intelligence chief, Adm. Pierre Lacoste, was dismissed after he refused to answer questions from Mr. Hernu about reports that French agents had carried out the attack.

One crew member, a Portuguese photographer, was killed when the Rainbow Warrior was sunk in Auckland Harbor on July 10, shortly before it was to lead a protest flotilla against French nuclear weapons testing in the South Pacific.

Blow to Authority Is Seen

Mr. Hernu's resignation and Admiral Lacoste's dismissal were designed in part to end the political storm surrounding the Greenpeace affair. But the immediate reaction to the moves indicated the furor had not ended.

In a front-page editorial today, titled

"A Mess," *Le Monde* said, "It is hard to see now Mr. Mitterrand can act with his former authority on the important questions that have been held in abeyance."

The Government's "strange behavior," the editorial said, "will harm the image enjoyed by France in the eyes of diverse foreign publics."

The "surgical operation," the authoritative daily said in an accompanying article, "gives substance to the image of a President backing up in the face of the pressure of the press, of a Prime Minister constrained to cut his losses, with both of them making known the powerlessness of the Minister of Defense to establish, or to get at, the truth."

Even officials of the governing Socialist Party said the Government had

reacted slowly to press reports of a cover-up by some officials.

Lionel Jospin, the party leader, said Friday night that "obstacles" to the truth should have been removed "more quickly, more forcefully, and by us."